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File Rec 13-10

Department of State

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, PINS, PINT, SHUM, AR

Ambassy BUENOS AIRES

September 27, 1977

Estimate of Current Montonero Strength and  
National and International Activity

CHARGE  
POL/R  
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CHRON

RSO met with senior member of the Argentine intelligence community. Source stated that presently the military war against the subversives is rapidly coming to an end and that by next year the terrorist activities should be limited to action on the labor, student and religious fronts. Source stated that several days ago they had discovered what they believed to be the last of the jamming stations used recently by the Montoneros to interfere with national broadcasts. The station broadcasted under the title "Liberated Argentina."

Source stated that Montonero activities throughout the country have decreased with the exception of Rosario. The increase in Rosario is due to the transfer of units from Santa Fe to that city. Source stated that the movement in total is in disarray and the units are continually moving from one area to another to avoid discovery by security services. Although this has inhibited government action against them, it has also made it very difficult for the terrorists to take any consolidated action against government targets. Source stated that at present the Montonero combative strength nationwide is considered to be about 750. This figure is based on an analysis made at the beginning of this month. During the month there have been additional losses which would have to be subtracted from that estimate.

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ( ) In Part (X) In Full

( ) Classify as ( ) Extend as ( ) Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

RSO:RJKelly:mek

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Source stated that there have been numerous defections from the Montoneros. First, by terrorists who have fled the country, either upon direction of a higher authority or on their own initiative. Second, persons who have stepped out of combat (gone to the margin) and third, persons who have surrendered to the government. In the past several months there have been approximately 40 such surrenders. This represents an estimated 5-6 percent of the existing Montonero combat strength. Source stated that a recent survey was conducted of the persons who had surrendered to determine why they had not surrendered earlier. The general consensus was that they were unaware of the procedures for surrendering and they did not believe the government would give them good treatment. Source stated the government's policy is to provide good treatment for any terrorists that surrender and to give them one-third of what would be the normal sentence. Source stated that the security services have not made clear to the terrorists the procedures for surrendering and the assurances of good treatment. Source hoped to see an increase in the number of Montoneros who turn themselves in in the future.

Source stated that the Montonero supreme command has been in Europe, with headquarters in Rome, for quite some time but now even the second level leadership has been recalled from Argentina and consequently there is very little leadership or direction to the present Montonero activities. The National Conduction had attempted to infiltrate leadership back into the country every 40 days to provide temporary direction. However, the past three leaders were captured within seven days of their arrival in Argentina and subsequently they have stopped infiltrating leadership back into Argentina for periodic visits. Source stated that the Montonero leadership in Europe has established contacts with Al Fatah and affiliated Arab organizations. Recently, Firmenich and Vaca Narvaja met with the head of Al Fatah and other Arab organizations. Source stated the purpose of these meetings and discussions is not known at this time.

Source stated that although the main terrorist organizations are being systematically eliminated, there still are numerous small groups of various political ideologies that have remained active up to the present. These organizations will be better dealt with when the main groups have been eliminated. Two days ago in Mar del Plata, a new organization was identi-

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fied as the Communist-Marxist-Leninist Party. This element, although small, was discovered to have a people's prison, communications equipment and sophisticated weapons, including the INGRAHAM line of submachineguns. Source stated they also had long-barrelled weapons that apparently have come from the U.S. Source stated this group has no relationship to the legal Communist Party of Argentina which has not been involved in any terrorist activities. Source stated that some of these small groups have been receiving financial support from outside the country. The intelligence services believe, but do not have definitive proof, that the Cuban Embassy has been providing financial support for the Fidelist-based movements and that other groups have received some limited support from the Fourth International, based in Paris. Source stated that the Montoneros and the ERP had financed their own operations through kidnappings, bank robberies, extortions and other such activities and had not received financial assistance from abroad.

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